

September – Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

STATISTICS

- During 2004, 727 women in Michigan were newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer.
- The rate of new cases of ovarian cancer in Michigan is similar to U.S. rate.
- In 2005, 538 women in Michigan died of the disease.
- Ovarian cancer death rates in Michigan and the U.S. are similar.
- Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.
- Ovarian cancer is most common in post-menopausal women.
- The average age for developing ovarian cancer is 61 years old.
- Ovarian cancer has a high death rate because 70% of cases are not diagnosed before the cancer has spread beyond the ovary.
- It is estimated that one woman out of 55 will develop ovarian cancer in her lifetime.

SCREENING TEST*

Currently, there is **no** effective screening test for ovarian cancer.

*The CA-125 test has a high false-positive rate and is considered to be "not adequate" as an early detection tool when used alone.

RISK FACTORS

- Factors that **increase** a woman's risk for developing ovarian cancer:
 - Family history of ovarian or breast cancer
 - Personal history of breast cancer
 - Never having children
 - Infertility or not having children until late in life
 - Early menarche (before age 12) or late menopause (after age 50)
 - High fat diet
 - Use of talcum powder on genital area
 - White/Caucasian race
 - Older age
 - Being of Ashkanazi Jewish descent
- Factors that **reduce** a woman's risk for developing ovarian cancer:
 - Birth control pills
 - Having multiple children
 - Breast feeding
 - Having a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) or tubal ligation (female sterilization)
 - Having both ovaries removed

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/>

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation

<http://www.thegcf.org>

Michigan Department of Community Health

<http://www.michigan.gov/cancer>

National Cancer Institute

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/ovarian>

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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Recent studies have shown that the following symptoms are more likely to occur in women with ovarian cancer than women in the general population:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

If you have these symptoms almost daily and with increasing severity for more than a few weeks, you should see your doctor, preferably a gynecologist, for a thorough examination.

FAMILY HISTORY

Women who have inherited certain altered (mutated) genes have a much higher risk of developing ovarian cancer.

These mutations may be found on:

- BRCA1
- BRCA2
- hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer (HNPCC) genes

Although women with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation are at higher risk for ovarian cancer, only 10% of women with ovarian cancer have one of these mutations.

The majority of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer do not have a strong family history for developing the disease

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